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## THE STRATEGY OF JESUS.

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STRATEGY, in its best sense, is the art of the general. To be successful, a general must know his own powers and have confidence in himself. Otherwise he cannot inspire confidence in his men. The bravest soldier feels his courage weakened when he suspects the strategic incompetence of his superior officer. Secondly, he must know his men and know how to call out their loyalty. Thirdly, he must hold himself under control and subordinate his personal impulses to the interests of the cause he fights for. And, finally, he must understand his enemy and be able, by seizing the advantages of time and place, to dictate to him when and where the decisive battles shall be fought.

Jesus has been called captain, prince, and king—titles more or less closely associated with military life. But he has seldom been given the title that specifically recognizes ability to plan a campaign. Yet his generalship was of the most masterful kind, and his life was the carrying out of a plan to which his every movement was adjusted with the express purpose of fighting its final and decisive battle on his own ground and at his own time. When some alternative course of action lay before him that would have precipitated the crisis, he turned aside with the words: "My time is not yet come."

Jesus knew himself and had confidence in his plan of action. It is said that, when Abraham Lincoln formed his first cabinet, William H. Seward, as secretary of state and by virtue of his superior culture and longer political experience, confidently expected to dictate the policy of the government. But he was not long in finding that Lincoln was master in his own house. In like manner, Jesus would allow no man to dominate him, and when Peter, perhaps the older man of the two, ventured to suggest that Jesus was mistaken, and to propose a different way for

him to reach his end, the quick reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" settled it once for all that he would allow no one to dictate his policy for him.

Jesus knew how to bind his disciples to himself. When at Capernaum multitudes of his half-hearted followers were leaving him, he turned to the Twelve and said, "Will you also go away?" with an emphasis on the personal pronoun that made them feel at once that they were more to him than the common crowd. It was like Cæsar's appeal to the Tenth Legion. It challenged their loyalty, and brought out Peter's grand declaration of faith that strengthened the faith of the others and committed him to a position from which there was no retreat.

Again, the able general must know how to strengthen the confidence of his men after an apparent defeat. The Pharisees had demanded of Jesus that he should attest his mission by a sign from heaven, and he had refused. His disciples doubtless knew the Jewish traditions of the Bath Kol, the daughter of the voice, according to which certain of their most pious and learned rabbis, when hard pressed by their opponents in argument, had appealed to the judgment of heaven and had been indorsed by a mysterious voice or echo sounding from the sky. His disciples might interpret his refusal of the test as an acknowledgment of defeat, and the Pharisees would certainly do their best to have the people see it in that light. But Jesus never submitted his cause to trial by ordeal. He let the matter pass for the moment with only an answer to the Pharisees. But in the quiet of the sail across the lake, taking for his text the disciples' discussion about bread, he discoursed to them on the danger of the pharisaic influence, and pointed out that he who had so miraculously multiplied the loaves and fishes on two previous occasions as an act of mercy needed no sign from heaven to attest his divine mission. The leaven of the Pharisees doubtless continued its pernicious work among the masses, but the disciples were saved.

It is a dangerous thing in war to yield ground in the face of the enemy in order to effect a new alignment, lest the enemy and one's own soldiers mistake the movement for a retreat and the former

be encouraged, while the latter become demoralized. Jesus had completed a preaching tour in Perea, and the time had come to return to Jerusalem. The Pharisees said to him, "Get thee hence, for Herod will kill thee!"—a threat without foundation, as appears from other passages concerning Herod's attitude toward Jesus. We cannot believe the Pharisees intended it as a friendly warning. They may have wished merely to hurry him out of their immediate neighborhood, where he was undermining their local influence with the common people. They may have wished to get him the sooner to Jerusalem, where the Sadducees could more readily coöperate for his destruction. Possibly it was a mere ruse in the hope of frightening Jesus and so making him ridiculous in the eyes of the people. But, more probably, they knew he was going to Jerusalem and wished to have his going appear as if due to their warning, so that they could hold up before the people as a coward him whom the people a little while before had wanted to make king in Herod's stead. Jesus would not allow any such interpretation to be put upon his movements. He was indeed going to Jerusalem; but it was not through fear of Herod. To make them certain of that, he bids them carry a message for him to the king, calling him plainly a "fox," the embodiment of timidity and cunning—the only occasion on which Jesus is known to have used an opprobrious epithet in personal reference to an individual—and defying him, as it were, to hasten by a day his deliberate progress. Moreover, the place to which he is going is Jerusalem, where all the prophets before him have perished. Why should he fear the lesser terrors of the king of Perea? His answer to the Pharisees left no room for suspicion in the minds of disciples or Herod or the multitude that he was afraid of any man, or that in leaving Herod's territory he was beating a retreat.

Yet Jesus did withdraw at times in the presence of danger. Was this good generalship? Certainly. For the Fabian policy successfully carried out is one of the most difficult and masterful forms of strategy. How often he had provocation to meet force with force! How many a man in his position, surrounded by his disciples and fellow-provincials, and seeing his enemies

gathering stones to stone him, would have lost his self-control and yielded to the muscular impulse of the moment to strike down his nearest assailant! The younger Cyrus, after months of preparation and the long march up to Cunaxa, at sight of his hated brother Artaxerxes in the opposing ranks, forgot his responsibility of leadership, and, in a momentary passion for revenge or glory, rushed on to single combat, lost his life and with it his hope of a kingdom, and left his army without a leader and without a cause. Jesus never lost his self-control nor sacrificed his cause to a momentary impulse. He could bide his time.

We have already noted Jesus' expression, "My time is not yet come." It indicates that he had a plan for his life, and to that plan all his movements must conform. He chose beforehand the time and place where the decisive conflict should be fought, and he would not allow friend or foe to hurry him on to a premature engagement. It was to be fought at Jerusalem, where, speaking generally, all the great martyr prophets had sealed their testimony with their blood. It should be at the Passover season, when the greatest numbers would be present to witness it. He must not die in obscurity, or by accident, or by the unthinking violence of a mob, for his death would then be of little more significance than that of any other man. But at the proper time he would voluntarily surrender himself, so that he could say of his life: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." At the same time, that his crucifixion might be the supreme manifestation of Jewish hatred, it must come by official decree of the Sanhedrin acting with malice aforethought, and that the act might also express the world's sin of indifference to righteousness, there must take part in it, along with the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities, the representatives of Rome, the embodiment of the world's materialism. All this was in Jesus' plan of campaign, and no military leader ever accomplished his purposes more completely. When the hour for which he had waited was come and gone, he could say of his plan, as a whole and in every detail: "It is finished."